

# COWLITZ COUNTY

## TECHNICAL SERVICES CENTER

### EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT DIVISION

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### Press Release

10:00 PM, 1/28/97

Contact: Cowlitz County EOC, (360) 577-3031

Air samples taken tonight by EPA officials in the vicinity of the Longview Weyerhaeuser facility found odors, but no measurable levels of the two potentially harmful ingredients that were part of yesterday's sulfate turpentine spill. Odors from that spill have been reported over a wide area of southwestern Washington and northwestern Oregon.

The monitoring equipment used was capable of detecting mercaptans and hydrogen sulfide at concentrations as low as one part per million. Neither chemical was detected at that level.

The samples were taken at the waste pond at the west end of the Weyerhaeuser mill and at two locations in nearby neighborhoods where strong odors had been reported.

"The human nose can detect many odors at levels far below the concentrations at which chemicals can affect human health," said Eric Heinitz, on-scene coordinator for the Washington Department of Ecology. "People can smell sulfate turpentine at just a few parts per billion, or at levels a thousand times less than the concentration where health effects occur."

The smell, which has been described as similar to cat urine or rotten eggs, could persist in the area for several days according to state and federal environmental officials. Ventilation with fresh air should minimize traces of the smell that may be lingering in clothing, vehicles and homes. Normal laundering of clothing will also remove traces of the odor.

Although the smell is irritating, health experts do not expect long-term health effects. Possible short-term effects include nausea, dizziness, headaches, eye and throat irritation, and chest pain. Persons experiencing these effects are advised to seek medical advice.

Earlier reports of the noxious odor were received from as far away as Olympia and Astoria; however, recent reports indicate that the affected area is now much smaller.

Water samples taken from the Columbia River are being analyzed for any possible impacts to water. Clean-up crews will continue working through the night removing the spilled chemical from the waste pond and from an open sump.

Local, state and federal agencies will continue monitoring Weyerhaeuser's cleanup efforts.

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